



The Philatelic Communicator

Journal of Writers Unit 30 of the

American Philatelic Society

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The President's Message

By Robert de Violini

Ken and Joe once again suffered through the trials imposed on them by the USPS and its transfer of mail between Jackson, Miss., and Memphis, Tenn. (a distance of only some 210 miles with a good Interstate highway connecting the two cities). They got the last issue out in spite of the USPS's lack of understanding that mail (and particularly Express Mail) addressed to go from Point A to Point B, that gets missent to Point C, should not be returned to Point A to start over again, but should be forwarded directly to Point B.

(Note for Gordon M.—to whom do Joe and Ken need to talk in order to stop this kind of geographic silliness?)

As I mentioned last time, we have elections this year. The term of office is for two years. There will be three openings on the WU Council, plus the posts of president, the two vice-presidents, and secretary-treasurer.

I will not be running for any of these, as I am now completing my second term as president. In accordance with the bylaws, the immediate past-president becomes the chairman of the WU Council.

We have some very well-qualified members who I hope will declare themselves for positions in which they feel they will be able to assist the Writers Unit in its growth and development during this last portion of the century.

Jane King Fohn has agreed to act once again as the nominations committee for the Writers Unit, and will accept inputs from prospective candidates. The deadline for submitting your name is May 1, 1991. Her address is Route 2, Box 352, Leander, TX 78645.

The names and ballot will be published not later than June 15, 1991—very likely in the Second Quarter issue for this year. The new officers will assume their positions at STaMpsHOW in August.

Something else to announce is the WU Breakfast at ROMPEX, site of the APS Spring Meeting. It will take place at 8:30 Sunday morning, May 19, in the Holiday Inn Denver I-70 East Hotel and Convention Center. Tickets are \$10.00 per

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An Open Letter to the Postmaster General and the Assistant Postmaster General

Postmaster General Anthony M. Frank
Assistant Postmaster General Gordon C. Morison
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington DC 20260

Dear Mistrs Frank and Morison:

Relations between the United States Postal Service and the philatelic community, including philatelic writers, have never been worse.

Wafting over the standoff drifts a stench of corruption.

The public cordiality during ceremonial occasions camouflages the chronic and worsening malaise we all feel. Quiet diplomacy undertaken by representatives of the philatelic press has been rebuffed, with insult gratuitously added to injury.

I have kept my peace about this for two years, hoping that the diplomatic approach would work. We all stand to lose something when scandal erupts. But it is clear the negotiations have failed.

Although we as writers, editors, and publishers are not disinterested observers, and our specific interests need to be

►► Page 16.

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person. Breakfast reservations should be made with Writers Unit 30 Secretary-Treasurer George Griffenhagen, 2501 Drexel Street, Vienna, VA 22180. His telephone is (703) 560-2413.

Hotel accommodations can be arranged at the Holiday Inn by writing 15500 East 40th Avenue, Denver, CO 80239 or by telephoning (303) 371-9494. ROMPEX rates *until April 15* are \$54.50 single and \$60.50 double occupancy.

Our supply of items for the traditional doorprize drawings at these breakfasts is quite low, so if you have some material that is pertinent to philatelic literature or writing that you'd like to donate to the cause, please send it along to me. What we don't use in May will be held for inclusion with the doorprizes in August at the WU breakfast in Philadelphia. □

The Philatelic Communicator

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All matters involving Writers Unit 30 business *except* editorial matter for this journal must be handled through the Secretary-Treasurer:

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►► Coming Literature Competitions. . . From page 16.

Deadlines have already passed for entering the PHILTEMA 91 literature competition to be held April 28 to May 5 in Cinisello Balsamo, Italy, and Canada's National Philatelic Literature Exhibition, to be held May 3-5 at ORAPEX in Ottawa.

This is a chronic problem with foreign shows. Sending us an announcement five weeks ahead of the deadline is not sufficient if we are to notify WU30 members in time. Please send notices at least six months in advance. □

Coming Up

The biggest frustration in putting out this issue has been the delayed delivery of the last one. It was mailed on December 28, announced a deadline on submissions of January 31, but our regular "Watching the Weeklies" columnist, Robert A. Greenwald, didn't receive his copy until February 19.

Bob's experience was duplicated by many readers and potential contributors.

I have decided to postpone the promised treatment of autograph and manuscript collecting, and writers' thoughts on the relationship of those hobbies to philately, until next time, on the chance that some members who suffered late delivery may wish to submit their comments on those subjects.

Once again review copies of new stamp books are piling up. Whatever your specialty may be, I've probably got a book you'd love to read and comment on.

Deadline for the next issue has been pushed back to May 1, to coincide with our nominating process, but articles and letters to the editor should be in my hands by April 20 if possible. □

Changes

As we went to press last issue came word of Dane Claussen's departure from *Stamp Collector*. We had time and space only to flash that news.

Dane is now the publisher and general manager of *The Daily Reporter* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a business-community paper. He says it's a significant and lucrative advance in his career, but he plans to remain active in stamp journalism as well, free-lancing for *Stamp Collector* and *The Stamp Wholesaler*.

Dane's replacement at those papers, with the title executive editor, is David M. Schiller Jr., a collector of Japan, Scandinavia, Canada, India, and the United States. He operated a graphic arts company in Los Angeles for the past three years, and before that spent eight years editing an international religious newspaper.

We wish both men all the best in their new positions.

Robert L. Maurer has retired his "Staple" column that has graced the back cover of *The Interleaf* for the past eight years. Though we didn't always see eye to eye, his writing was first-rate. His absence will diminish *The Interleaf*, so I hope a successor will pick up the torch soon, and carry on. □

Editorial

Back to the ABCs of Journalism

The past few months of stamp writing have produced more than the usual number of journalistic goofs. Here are the ones that grated on me:

■ *Failure to check facts.* The February 20 *Christian Science Monitor* carried a Reuters story about the pictorial cancel issued in Indianapolis for Black History Month. This was the lead:

"Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson has become the first living black and only the second living person to be honored on a United States postmark. . . ."

"The only other living person to be so honored is a former astronaut and current senator, John Glenn (D) of Ohio."

That's wrong on both counts, even leaving out all the royal and papal visit special cancels. There must be literally dozens: I found three, just casually flipping through my accumulation.

I have a commercial cover franked with a pair of 3¢ Prexies, machine canceled December 9, 1969, at Wapakoneta, Ohio, with a die slug that reads HOMETOWN OF / NEIL ARMSTRONG / FIRST MAN ON MOON.

The day that I. King Jordan was inaugurated president of Gallaudet University, a special cancel was issued for the occasion, October 21, 1988, that read, "Deaf People can do Anything but Hear" / I. KING JORDAN / MARCH 13, 1988. My cacheted cover has Jordan's autograph next to his picture.

As for an earlier black example, New York had a June 20, 1990, cancel showing an outline map of Africa and the text NELSON MANDELA / VISIT TO NEW YORK CITY.

■ *Propaganda disguised as reporting.* In his January 19 "Stamps and Politics" column in *Stamp Collector*, Stephen G. Esrati discussed unified Germany's first souvenir sheet.

"The sheet is the first issue of united Germany to be printed by the former East German printing office in Leipzig. That step was obviously taken to keep the printers in Leipzig at work."

Baloney. That's just a Cold Warrior on autopilot. What's obvious to a thoughtful observer is that the quality of East German stamps is equal to or higher than their West German counterparts, and under current conditions it is a lot cheaper to print them in the East.

No doubt the German government has its reasons for maintaining redundant printing enterprises, one of which may be to maintain the Western printers' jobs despite the greater economy to be found in Leipzig—the reverse of what Steve wrote—but even that isn't necessarily obvious.

(Unlike some critics, I have no objection to Esrati's opinionated writing, even though I usually disagree with the opinions. But the line between factual reporting and opining ought not be obscured by the loaded transitional adverb.)

In the same vein, the Postal Service itself managed to put quite an upbeat spin on some truly bad news in its December *Memo to Mailers*. The headline story began:

"Eight out of ten First-Class letters, cards and large mailing envelopes are delivered on time, according to a new independent system initiated by the Postal Service to measure service from the customer's point of view."

That terminal phrase sticks in my craw. If it's from the customer's point of view, why didn't the publicist write, "One in every five letters is delivered late, a recent survey showed"?

■ *Publishing advertising as news.* Almost every publication is guilty of this at times, thus providing easy targets for *Columbia Journalism Review*'s Dart-tosser, but the January 19 issue of *Stamps* has set a modern record among our hobby's press.

The front page above-the-fold headline read, "Alevizos Auction offers Rare and Unusual Items." Page 9 carried "Frajola's ARIPEX Auction to Feature Postal History" across

three columns. Jacques C. Schiff Jr.'s "The Error Scene" column on the next page was titled "Philatelic Auctions May Become Addictive."

Two major auction houses were featured on page 19: "Harmers Reports on Dale-Lichtenstein Auctions" and "Christie's to Offer Gordon Kaye Collection." On top of all that, it was the week for the regular appearance of Charles Shreve's "Auction Views" column.

■ *Ethnocentrism.* In the December 31 *Linn's*, Michael Laurence published his annual roundup of the previous year's biggest stamp stories. To my surprise, all but one sentence concerned the United States.

The exception was this: "In Europe, David Feldman sold the unique Swedish 3 skilling-banco error for \$1.4 million."

Otherwise, the big stories on Mike's list were the fiasco of USPS mail handlers not recognizing the postal validity of certain stamps and souvenir sheets; postal inspectors closing down the Lutheran Stamps for Mission charity; design innovations on U.S. stamps; computer failure at the Philatelic Sales Division; squabbling between the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and USPS; the new postal museum; and market prices.

All those were important stories, but at least one foreign story was right up there with them—the philatelic and postal consequences of German unification. These events took up more inches in *Linn's* than several that made his list, and deservedly so.

Stamp writing has made significant advances in recent years, and there's no turning back. But even with the sophistication of our era, let's not lose sight of the basics. □

Specialty Societies—Show Your Words

By Robert de Violini

Each of the major philatelic shows around the country, and many of the regional exhibitions, hosts one or more specialty societies each year. The specialty groups hold meetings and seminars during these shows as a way of getting their members together, and to gain some new members at the same time.

But how many of them show the non-member collector what exists in the way of literature concerning their specialty? This display of literature is an excellent way of getting the word out about your group and to get more people interested in your specialty.

Bring along an array of your publications—the journal or newsletter, the handbooks on your specialty that your society has published. If your society has study groups or chapters, their individual publications will also be a drawing card for the show's visitors. Older issues can be given away or sold at a modest fee as an inducement to those who appear serious about joining.

Seeing and handling the actual publications is much better than merely handing out a list of what the society has available to its members. I know of a number of people who joined specialty groups only after seeing the literature of the field that was available to the members.

Almost all the national literature exhibitions accept, even invite, authors and editors to provide material in a non-

competitive status. These are not judged, but their mere being on display helps spread the word about the organization.

So, to "get the word out," you need to display the word—words about your special collecting interests. Do it. You'll be pleased with the results. □

On the Death of Philately as We Know It

By Mark A. Kellner

I have come to the sad conclusion that philately could very well die as a hobby—and sooner, rather than later—if we don't take a good, hard look at how we conduct ourselves as philatelic journalists and leaders.

We shall kill off this hobby as we continue to neglect the fun aspects and focus on the trivial tantrums some of us raise over who gets a press pass to what show, or who wrote what about which stamp investment. The vast energy expended on these debates could do wonders—if it was turned to promoting the hobby.

Only promoting the hobby will bring in the newcomers philately needs to survive. Only promotion will keep people in the hobby. Only promotion will expand its horizons.

Instead that effort is expended on a bunch of hokey. Instead of reading in this publication about how to make stamp writing better, we see the back-and-forth squabbling worthy of a bad daytime soap—or an even worse prime-time one.

Let me digress a bit and share where I come from. After a decade's absence from day-to-day philatelic writing (I moved into business and "high tech" subjects, where I earn my full-time income today), I got back in during 1990 both to help *Stamp Collector* and because writing about stamps offers me what it offers many, a release from the daily grind of my writing work. "Bits" and "bytes" are fun, but after a while the soul yearns for more.

My writing for *SC* consists largely of news from Washington and the U.S. Postal Service, as well as stories about visiting foreign officials (the Soviets were my big source in 1990) and, spasmodically, a computer column. I've sent in the odd letter to the editor and written what should appear as either a guest editorial or guest commentary. I hope to do more.

Along the way, I've started seeing some distressing signs within the writing community. *SC*'s then executive editor, Dane Claussen, nominated me for reinstatement in both WU 30 (I was one of the original "junior" members, way back in 1972) and the International Philatelic Press Club. Reading the publications of both—and Stephen Esrati's guest editorial in *SC* on press admission at expos—I see the same kind of discussion I did a decade ago. We're still griping and moaning about the terrible conditions afforded the "philatelic press," as if we really matter.

I believe the hobby's leadership—and that has to include you and me since we're both writing about the hobby for general circulation—too often focuses on the petty peeves of parsimonious people, and forgets the main points. As my mother-in-law would say, we're "majoring in the minors."

Yes, our work is important. Yes, we work hard at producing columns, newsletters, articles and handbooks. Yes, we deserve respect and decent treatment. And, yes, there have

been abuses by over-zealous show committees (for example, Capex 87) and postal administrations who could care less about us (the USPS has, sometimes, fallen into that trap).

But we're not deity, or even close. I mean no disrespect, but too many of us think we're so far above the crowd that the world needs to bend in our way. "Tain't so, McGee," to borrow a line from old-time radio.

We're writers, full or part-time. We may have journalism training or we don't, but that's neither here nor there. Our bylines may appear in *The New York Times* or *Linn's Stamp News* or the *Podunk Stamp Club Courier*, and that, too, isn't all that relevant.

What is relevant, in my view, is that we like stamps and stamp collecting enough to want to share that liking—dare I say love?—with others, and we want to do it through words. It's a lot easier to write about stamps, even after an eight- or nine- or ten-hour day at a PC in my office, because that writing is fun writing.

I've never asked him, but I would suspect that John Hotchner—who works what must be a full day at the State Department—feels the same way. Ditto any of us who hold down other jobs and then come home to scribe for stampdom.

Why is it, then, that so much of the general hobby press carries this continual cant? Why is it that so much time and space in the *Communicator* is wasted on political battles and heavily-breathed threats?

Don't we have *anything* better to write about?

I can't offer wholesale solutions, but I must raise the question. There *must* be better stories around, things we can write about. There must be someone in your local club worthy of a little ink. Randy Neil has done some of this in his "Philately and People" features in *SC*. I did some of that 13 years ago in *Linn's*.

Why is it that stamp columns are disappearing faster from daily newspapers than ads for savings and loan associations? Could it be because of our cantankerous, crabby mien in so many circumstances? While I disagree with published comments in the *Communicator* about which *New York Times* stamp writer was or wasn't a USPS shill, I cannot disagree that too many of us—myself included—have taken the easy way out by meeting a weekly column deadline with a new issue wrap-up.

How about more columns in the mode of a Barth Healey of the *New York Times* or a Bill McAllister of *The Washington Post*? Those writers tell more than what's coming out at the post office; McAllister has been an especially tenacious newshound. Needless to say, the *Post* feels McAllister is a good enough writer to give him the better part of a tabloid-sized page in its Friday "Weekend" section. And that's *without* any advertising support from stamp dealers.

I understand that, in any fraternity, there are problems that need to be discussed, and the *Communicator* is a good place for that. However, I would urge and implore all of us to not take up too much space (as I may have here) with the same old rant-and-rave, but rather focus on what we can do to make and keep the hobby attractive to the masses.

Otherwise, I suspect our audience will shrink to an even smaller number than we are dealing with now. □

Grammar and Style

By Herman Herst Jr.

While there are not as many misspelled words as there are breaches of grammar, my handy scissors get steady use.

Adjectives that do not agree with the nouns they modify are one of the greatest lapses in our stamp magazines. "Everybody forgot their stamp albums" is a sample. "Everybody" is a singular word, and while "his or her" may seem awkward it is nevertheless correct.

"I always like those kind of things" is another. "Kind" is singular, and to tie it up with a plural such as "those" is wrong. Again, the proper use may be awkward but "that kind of things" would be better. Admittedly, "things" is plural but the word modifying "kind" takes a singular pronoun.

Many writers confuse the words "less" and "fewer." They are not synonymous. "There were less people at the New York show" may be intended to state that the New York show did not have as many people attending as another show with which it was compared. But to talk of "less" people indicates that those who were there were not complete people. They may have been missing arms, legs, heads or other parts of their bodies. The word "fewer" would allow the people to have all of the parts that normal people possess.

In philatelic jargon, there are expressions that conflict with themselves. It is amazing how many collectors do not realize the word "mint," borrowed from our numismatic cousins, means exactly as released from the post office.

Writers are not as guilty of this sin as many collectors, but the only way a stamp without gum can properly be called mint is if it was issued without gum, such as the Byrd souvenir sheet. The greatest laugh in connection with a gum description was a New York auction house that described a regummed stamp as mint simply because it did not have a hinge mark.

The long ago deceased New York auctioneer, Max Ohlman, received lasting fame for his misuse of the word "unique." After calling a certain stamp unique, he called the very next lot "an identical lot." "Unique" means that there is no other like it.

The words "cancel" and "postmark" are not synonymous but misuse of the two words happens so often that it is not too serious an error. A cancel is intended to deface a stamp to prevent its reuse; a postmark contains words, or a date or indication of the post office that used it.

Accomplished writers do their best to steer themselves away from clichés, but our philatelic magazines are full of them.

Surely there are better ways to describe a collector than to say that he burns the midnight oil, or is as dumb as a bunny.

"All his friends would fill a phone booth" is a rather trite way to suggest that the individual has few whom he can call friends. Just why a doornail is lacking in life we may never know, but to call a stamp issuing country "as dead as a doornail" insults the reader's consciousness.

Try to avoid some of the examples of poor writing cited in this little article, and your contributions to our stamp magazines will be much better received. □

Letter Exchange

By Ken Lawrence

Just before Christmas, I received this letter:

Hi There.

You don't know me, but I know you. In fact, I've sold stamps and covers, if not to you, to most of your friends. But you've never heard of me despite the fact that I've been in business over 30 years.

I've tried to advertise in every journal here and abroad. But no one will accept my ads even though I have offered cash in advance.

No one will mention my predicament in print. Not one writer will complain about the unfair treatment I receive. You see, a very small group of what I call elitists keep me out of the press. They insist that I deal with them alone. Only after I've sold out will they advertise my existence.

This is unfair. And over the years it has outraged me. Still, there is nothing I can do because the writing community and collectors never complain that my advertisements are not accepted. It's almost as if only this small group of elitists can make decisions for the entire hobby.

I always thought that in America the press was free to print anything that satisfied community standards. Not here. I am not a pornographer. So why aren't I and my fellow businessmen allowed to advertise? Some would say it's because I sell artistic samples. They would call me a forger instead of the artist that I am.

But whether my art is acceptable or not, here is the important question: should a small group of people decide for the hobby that can and cannot be published? I think it's unAmerican. Imagine President Bush saying, "Well now, a few of us will get together and let you in the press know what we decide. And, we don't talk about this or that subject." Where is the faith in the common man that our founders envisioned? Can't he be trusted to make decisions for himself? Apparently not.

Besides this fundamental betrayal of our constitutional right to be informed without an elitist censorship, there is the question of value. Many claim that my art is valueless. Really! I ask you to consider my teacher Jean de Sperati. Is his art worthless? Perhaps the elitists favor the sand dune countries for value. Or how about the junk many supposedly legitimate countries put out. Is this value?

My art will far exceed this junk when it is resold some years from now. I could claim a conflict of interest between the elitists and the "good" collecting areas, but why bother. All I am asking is for the right to advertise and let the reader, the market, make its decision rather than a few people. What could be fairer?

If I am allowed to advertise, other than the fact that this elitist censorship would be ended, there would be one other large advantage. The average collector would be informed. I'll send him my catalog. He will know which stamps and covers I have recreated. He will be able to protect himself without relying on the Brahmins. Isn't that what the good old USA is all about?

Now I have a confession to make. I am not a forger. My

name is Bill Hagan. I've written for *The Philatelic Literature Review* for 15 years and I am the current president of the Oregon Stamp Society. I collect literature and Australia, and yes, have a few forgeries. This subject, however, has always bothered me. It came to a head when I tried to get a catalogue of Philart samples for my collection.

No one would respond to my letters despite the fact that I have a major library and have written extensively on the subject. I have older forgery catalogs but this and other current works, whatever they may be, are unobtainable.

Why? Someone is making the decision that I'll buy and then resell the samples. I'm a crook so these people will make sure I don't get this or any catalog listing forgeries. This is a Royalist view that would seem inappropriate in the USA. So why don't writers complain that this censorship shouldn't be tolerated as they most certainly would in the public media?

Being a connoisseur of crank letters, I sent off a response thanking Hagan for his letter, and pointing out that what he wrote is bunk:

"Freedom of the press is the freedom to publish or not to publish whatever writers and editors and publishers deem meritorious. No government agency has ordered any of us not to publish information on where to buy a catalog of forgeries.

"In fact, I published a review of the catalog you're interested in, in *The Philatelic Communicator*, which you'd have received if you were a member of WU30."

I invited him to join our organization, and asked him for the names of people who haven't answered his letter. He declined to join, and couldn't name a single writer who hasn't answered his letters, but nevertheless insisted he's right.

This is despicable. As I learned by inquiring, *Linn's* has never been asked to publish an advertisement for Pro-Phil Forum forgeries, and has no policy forbidding such ads. If one were to be submitted, it would be controversial, but would not be rejected out of hand.

Four years ago, *Linn's* did publish a full-page ad for fake R.F. overprints, advertised as such. Even now, *Linn's* runs large ads for the Sandafayre auction firm in Britain, which has dozens of forgeries from Bremen and elsewhere in nearly every auction. If anything, *Linn's* may be too blasé about the marketing of these counterfeits, but it certainly has given readers fair warning that they exist.

Bill Hagan, who doesn't want to be confused by mere facts, is a well-known collector of philatelic literature. I wonder if he ever reads any of it. □

Writers Hall of Fame Nominations Open

It is time to call for nominations to the APS Writers Unit Hall of Fame. Nominees should be writers, editors, columnists and publishers, living or deceased, who have made notable contributions to the field of philatelic literature. They may be from any country, and do not have to be past or present members of the APS or of the Writers Unit.

Please send nominations, along with supportive background information, to Barbara R. Mueller, APS Writers Unit, 225 South Fischer Ave., Jefferson, WI 53549. Nominations must be received prior to the July 1, 1991, deadline.

Names of new inductees to the National Writers Hall of Fame will be announced at the Writers Unit Breakfast scheduled for Sunday, August 25, during the APS Annual Convention at STaMpsHOW in Philadelphia.

A plaque with the names of all the inductees hangs in the American Philatelic Research Library in State College, Pennsylvania. □

Go, and Buy Thee a Macintosh

By Mark A. Kellner

After 20 years as a stamp collector, 18 years as a journalist (and APS member, by the way) and eight years as a computer user and reporter, I am now certain of two things.

One is that the "wartime" issues of Guernsey and Jersey, listed by Gibbons, Michel, Yvert and everyone else I know of as legitimate stamps, should be included in the Scott catalog. (Actually that's not a relevant point here, but you gotta take your chances when they come up.)

The other is that Apple Computer Inc.'s Macintosh is the only computer a writer should buy or use. And that is the relevant point here.

For eight years, I've worked with PCs, chiefly the MS-DOS, or IBM-compatible, variety. Like editor Ken Lawrence, I started on a CP/M machine (a Sanyo) but soon moved to the bonnie fields of DOS, wherein I have stayed.

Last year, I joined *Federal Computer Week* as a Senior Reporter; my first assignment was a "State of the Mac" survey. Then, over the summer, I acquired the Mac beat at *FCW*. In October, I was in Fremont, California, when Apple launched its three low-priced machines (see *Stamp Collector*, October 13, 1990).

The day after the October 15 Apple event, a Mac IIsi arrived at *FCW's* offices and I've had a chance to play with it from then until now (January 15). I was hooked.

Christmas-time brought my wife and me to the local Computer Factory store where we got a IIsi of our very own. Thanks to software supplied by various publishers, I have three word processing programs: Nisus®, with which this article is being written; MacWrite® II from Claris Corp., an Apple subsidiary; and Write Now™ from T/Maker Company.

Both Nisus and MacWrite are rather advanced programs, costing about \$250 each "on the street," i.e., through mail order or a dealer such as Egghead Discount Software or Soft Warehouse. WriteNow is also rather advanced, but its street price is around \$125.

Claris was also kind enough to send along its FileMaker Pro database program, which I intend to try out. In fact, as a computer writer, that's how and why I received all this software: to test it, evaluate it and either write full reviews (which I intend to do for the word processors) and/or reference it in other stories.

That's not payola, I hasten to point out: I can still be tough on a company when the situation demands, just as *Linn's* or *Stamp Collector* or you or I can slam a postal administration after getting an FDC.

I could talk about my own travails in getting things printed from my Mac (Joe Frye, my heart goes out to you, sir!), but

let me tell you about the joy, the sheer joy, I've had with the Mac. (The printing problems were solved with a device, called ParaLink, that hooks up to my 24-pin Panasonic dot-matrix printer and some software called PrintLink, both from GDT Software and both worth getting if you have similar needs.)

The first joy is the sheer feeling I get using the Mac versus the PC. The Mac feels, well, *alive*. That may sound crazy, but hear me out. The PC and its applications are largely character-based; you need to type in a command at the "C:\>" prompt to start a program and then work with other commands and function keys once you're in the program. Also, until the advent of Microsoft Windows (and its most recent incarnation, version 3.0) and supporting applications, there was precious little support for using a "mouse" pointing device in conjunction with the keyboard.

I personally believe that Windows 3.0 and its cousin applications represent a "snare and a delusion." By the time you add up the cost of the minimal hardware configuration (a 386SX-based PC with *at least* 2MB of random-access memory, plus VGA color adapter and monitor and a hard disk) needed to properly run the various programs and that of the applications software itself, you've spent the better part of \$5,000.

Today's Macs can get you into a graphical user interface (or GUI)—that's what the Mac and Windows interfaces are called—for substantially less, as little as half that, including an ink-jet printer, which my Windows configuration didn't.

Even with the arrival of Windows, the DOS world's GUI standard lacks two elements the Mac offers today: one is a common command structure: the same key combination that will let me quit my word processor works with the spreadsheet and database and any other program; the other is the ability to open multiple applications on any model of the Mac (with sufficient memory).

That feature, which lets you click and switch from word processor to database to graphics program, is called Multi-Finder and anything similar in MS-DOS really needs the 386SX chip and Windows 3.0 or another program such as Desqview (cq).

In short, achieving the look and feel of the Mac costs less and is more easily accessed on the Mac, today, than it is on MS-DOS. And I say that as a reporter who uses MS-DOS day in and day out.

Working with a mouse and keyboard isn't as hard as it seems; when combined with the "graphical" look and feel of the Mac, where you see your document in true "WYSIWYG," or what-you-see-is-what-you-get fashion, it offers one of the best ways I know of to harness the potential of the computer.

You see what your finished product is going to look like, you can move around blocks of text and make changes with great ease, and you don't have to earn a Ph.D. in computer science to make every program work because once you've mastered one application, you've got the basics of them all.

Now, I'll admit that I'm somewhat more fortunate than many: computers are provided for me, free, at work and I have the chance to try out a lot of things before buying them. I also have the opportunity of talking with a lot of people who

know much more about computers than I do, so making informed choices is an easier task.

Finally, having worked with PCs for about eight years now, including 20 months as a full-time data processing manager for a non-profit group and supervising the spending of about \$400,000 of someone else's money, I do know a bit more than the novice buyer.

But I also know that if the technology I'm using to write this article was around, say, when I was starting the Club of Channel Islands Collectors or writing a weekly stamp column or working for International Postal Marketing Corp. as a publicist and ad manager, that I could have done more, faster and perhaps even better.

Not worrying about typos or misspelled words (the spell-checker will catch them), not fretting over how to organize a piece (cut-and-paste works just fine, thank you) and not having to concern myself with so many of the mechanics of writing lets me concentrate on the subject at hand: writing.

With a Mac and its easy-to-use style (even down to simple things such as putting a clock on screen without disturbing any application I use) and the wide range of products available for it, that writing flows more easily and is more fun than with the PC. I've not started in on any newsletters, yet, but I look forward to using this tool in a number of ways.

Clubs and specialist groups fortunate enough to have a Mac user as a member should draw on his assistance with publications and the like. You'll get a result that is astonishingly good, which couldn't be dreamt of by most of us ten or 15 years ago.

One final thought: if you're worried about IBM PC "compatibility," there's more than one way to solve it. Programs such as MacWrite II offer "translators" between its files and those of WordPerfect, etc., to exchange *fully-formatted* files with DOS-based systems; the newer Macs all have Apple's SuperDrive which can write 3.5 inch diskettes in a DOS format, too.

For electronic submissions, all you generally need is an ASCII file, which all Mac word processing programs create, and a modem. Electronic mail services such as GENie (cq) or MCI Mail take care of the rest.

If you're searching for a way to make your use of computers more enjoyable, get a Mac. If you want to upgrade from MS-DOS, or if you want to be free to be creative with your work, get a Mac.

Oh, and by the way, if you feel those Guernsey and Jersey wartime stamps deserve full catalog status from Scott, the next time you see Dick Sine, tell him so. □

Letters

From John MicGlire:

I read with much sorrow Al Starkweather's article "Can Stamps Survive?" published in the recent (*Communicator*).

I was very disappointed that such a self-serving, rambling discourse would appear in the APS Writers Unit newsletter

without at least attempting to verify, or even question many of the alleged claims.

Obviously, Starkweather was a very disgruntled employee and has chosen to attack me personally, as well as *Stamps*.

Since Starkweather's termination, *Stamps* has shown gains in both circulation and readership, something we were unable to do with Starkweather as editor.

"Can *Stamps* Survive?" Not only is *Stamps* surviving, but it is flourishing due to the dedication of every employee, including myself.

I wish Al Starkweather well in his future endeavors whether they are philatelically related or not. □

[John MicGlire is the publisher of *Stamps*.]

From Dane Claussen:

The article in the Fourth Quarter *PC* by Al Starkweather on his tenure as editor of *Stamps* was curious for several reasons.

For one, Al continuously took jabs at *Stamp Collector* newspaper, of which I was the editor during two-thirds of the time he was editor of *Stamps* newspaper. This is despite the fact that the present letter is the first time I know of that any current or former *SC* executive has been publicly critical of *Stamps* newspaper or of Al Starkweather.

In fact, after Al left *Stamps*, I wrote Al a general query letter about the possibility of him writing articles for *SC*, which Al didn't have the courtesy of responding to. And for someone who has now bent over backwards to backstab *SC*, which really didn't need to be mentioned at all, he sure was anxious to tell *SC* publisher Jim Magruder at Interpex 1990 that he was about to quit *Stamps*.

First Al says *Stamps* lost its identity because it was "taking on the appearance of *Stamp Collector*," and the sentence is worded vaguely enough so that one isn't quite sure whether it was the loss of identity that Al considers a "negative aspect" or if it was becoming more like *SC* that he considered "negative." Those are two different things, even if for him they are one and the same.

Someone should tell Al that there is a lot more to a newspaper's identity, even for *Stamps*, than whether it is in tabloid or magazine format. This is especially true in philately, in which there are few publications attracting readers because of the way they look.

Moreover, if *Stamps* had been more like *SC* it would have been positive for *Stamps*, not negative; *SC* always has had its own identity, while *Stamps* has been on a slippery slope towards irrelevance.

Al apparently still is smarting from *SC* definitively and permanently overtaking *Stamps* in circulation, even though Al admittedly was in no position to stop *Stamps*' decline nor hinder the improvements in *SC* (which itself has suffered a slight circulation drop).

Second, Al, without making a point, refers to a reader claiming an *SC* article was supposedly anti-Semitic; he doesn't cite which article nor does he make any qualifying statement about whether he, as an editor, agreed or disagreed with the comment. Al simply dangles a vague and unsupported

criticism of *SC*. Third, while it may have been Al's departure as editor of *Stamps* that put the last nail in the coffin, prompting Lloyd de Vries to quit as *Stamps*' FDC writer and join *SC*, I have several reasons, which I can't go into, to believe that Lloyd would have jumped ship even if Al had remained at *Stamps*.

Al also takes pains to find a letter saying "Linn's and *Stamp Collector* duplicate each other; *Stamps* stands uniquely alone as a people, society-oriented publication." Al, in the literally hundreds of survey responses and letters I've read and conversations I've had about philately's weeklies, I've run across people who like *SC* more than Linn's, Linn's more than *SC*, and even a few who like *Stamps* better than *SC*, or *Stamps* better than Linn's. I have never found anyone who likes *Stamps* better than both Linn's and *SC*.

Moreover my friends and acquaintances have been dropping their subscriptions to *Stamps* left and right for the last five years, and *Stamps*' circulation figures, bolstered admittedly only by the Publishers Clearing House nonsense, prove it.

In my case, I have been receiving ten to 25 philatelic journals, newspapers, and magazines during the past ten years, and *Stamps* has never been among them, nor have I subscribed to *Stamps* at any time during my more than 20 years as a stamp collector.

Finally, can you believe Al's statement that "the brain-trust represented by some of *Stamps*' dealer/writers could not be equalled anywhere in the world"? Get real, Al (incidentally, do you read French, Italian, German, Russian, Spanish and Dutch, so that you would know?)

Linn's during the last few years, and *SC* always, have intentionally limited the number of dealers writing for them. And after Lloyd de Vries and Leo John Harris both switched to *SC* (note that *Stamps* never had an exclusive on Pat Herst), the only notable names in the hobby writing only for *Stamps* are Schiff and Charles Shreve (and Al himself apparently had reservations about Shreve).

On the other hand, *SC* and Linn's each have many, many top experts writing for them, and a combined list of their regular columnists and frequent contributors reads like a partial Who's Who in American philately.

Since Al admits that he was "faced with an impossible situation" from the very first day he went to work for *Stamps*, I think Al should spend less time criticizing John MicGlire and *Stamp Collector* newspaper, and perhaps devote more time asking himself why he was dumb enough to work for *Stamps* in the first place.

He apparently took the job without visiting its offices, without getting a job description, without signing a contract, and possibly without being very familiar with the newspaper itself. No wonder he is oblivious enough to think that a small group of his columnists "could not be equalled anywhere in the world." □

From Janet Klug:

Thanks for another thought-provoking (in some cases just plain provoking) issue of *PC*. It's never boring!

I was glad to see Ken Stewart's article made it into a

forum where it might do some good. I don't agree with his comment that literature competitions should be done away with. I do feel strongly that literature competitions should be overhauled drastically and quickly.

Clearly defined judging criteria must be set down for operating and judging literature exhibitions before even one more of these events takes place. I think it is an abomination that judging standards do not exist.

Let's face it, the only point to exhibiting handbooks, special studies, and other books unlikely to be revised is greed for medals. Critical evaluation of these sorts of publications is quite appropriately handled in reviews appearing in the popular press. Additionally, these reviews have a far greater audience than any literature competition.

Judging of newsletters, journals and other periodicals does have merit, provided the main goal is to offer suggestions for improvement. If the jury provides constructive criticism, the editor can make adjustments to future issues.

The jury should consider whether implementation of these suggestions will help a newsletter better serve its readers. If not, then the suggestions have no merit. If the competition is held simply as an exercise to hand out medals, then it is meaningless to all but the mug-hunters.

Terrible inequities occur with classification of journals for competition. Is it really fair to judge a big-budget, slick journal serving thousands of members against a photocopied newsletter cranked out at minimal expense, serving a readership of a hundred or fewer people? The sole judging criteria, I feel, should be *Mekeel's* "How well does this publication serve its readership?"

Jury members must be accountable for their actions. They must provide useful suggestions for improvements in their critique. They must remain unbiased, even if the publication they are judging contains editorial matter with which they strongly disagree. If a jury member cannot be impartial, then these judges should be removed from their duties. Impartiality must never be compromised.

If I hear "white space" as a criticism one more time, I shall surely scream. I think the phantom cartoonist and Richard Thomas made this point succinctly.

In the long run, literature competitions are useless. The readers decide for themselves if the publication is worthwhile.

Keep up the good work, Ken! I am enjoying *PC* tremendously! □

From Martha Jane Zachert (To George Griffenhagen):

Enclosed is my check for 1991 dues. I have to tell you that I gave considerable thought to whether or not to renew this membership.

I am exceedingly tired of the recent content and tone of *The Philatelic Communicator*. Personal vendettas and snide remarks are not my idea of help to those of us who try to write and produce interesting, useful material for our readers. In case you wonder why I'm writing this to you rather than the editor it's because I think the editor's not listening.

I've read published letters that have said the same thing at greater length with no apparent attention being paid to them. You are in a position to know whether memberships are

affected by this, so I'm telling you: one more year and if the *PC* has not changed substantially, I'll not renew.

I hope that if you've gotten the same message from others around renewal time, you'll convey it to the officers of the unit.

On a happier note, congratulations on your own recent achievements and honors. Well-deserved, and I'm happy for you. □

From Richard Stambaugh:

For some time now I've wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your work with the *PC*. It has influenced and I think improved my work with the *MSS Bulletin*.

I'm writing to say two things. First I want to fault Jim Bender for criticizing you for writing so much of the copy in the *PC*. Either he doesn't edit a philatelic publication, or he is a lucky one indeed who gets enough articles submitted to fill even half an issue.

This brings me to my second point. Although I remember seeing Jim Bender's credentials cited somewhere before, I could not find it and so don't know where he's coming from. How about providing a little background info, such as "editor of XYZ" or "author of ABC," after the names of letter writers in the *PC*?

Once I start it's hard to stop. Let me add one more thing.

I can sympathize with the amount of work editors do, but I don't sympathize with their complaints about their memberships not contributing article and not participating in other ways to the life of their societies.

Writers Unit 30 is exceptional in that most of its members are seriously involved and committed people, but nearly all other groups consist of members with widely differing commitments.

I would assume that most editors are much more knowledgeable about their subjects than nine-tenths of their societies' membership and that the majority of members have little to contribute most of the time other than their dues. They joined to learn, not to teach. To complain about these people not contributing is a sign that maybe the time has come to pass on the editorship. □

[Which of Jim Bender's credentials should I have cited following such a silly letter—that he writes for the National Enquirer, or that he's an investigative reporter for several newspapers and a wire service?]

From T. P. McDermott:

I received the Fourth Quarter *PC* on February 14.

Bob de Violini's "Playing Catchup" helped answer one of my questions. The *PC* is the most useful tool to help officers of any philatelic study circle. □

From Mark A. Kellner:

I hate to be the one constantly disagreeing with Stephen G. Esrati, a man whose writing I respect and enjoy. But Dave Lidman, whom I knew during the 70s, was not a mere mimic of U.S. Postal Service (or, Post Office Department, as Mr. Stiles would have known the agency) news releases.

On more than one occasion, Dave took a current event as a starting point and built upon it. A particularly memorable item concerned the distribution of Bangladesh stamps within the then-nascent country. As I recall, *New York Times* reporter Fox Butterfield contributed to that Lidman column.

Sam Tower's tenure, I'll agree, was less pleasant. In one in-person encounter he refused to join the Philatelic Press Club or attend stamps shows. I could understand the latter; he walked with a cane and may have had great difficulty in getting around. But not joining with other prose-slingers is a little tougher to accept.

But, please, let's not sully Dave Lidman's fine reputation by calling him a mimic. Years of *The American Philatelist* and two glorious books (*A Treasury of Stamps* being my favorite) prove otherwise.

Also, Ken, your comment (page 106, *PC*, Fourth Quarter 1990) that *Linn's* takes long letters and transmogrifies them into the "What Others Are Saying" column doesn't fit my experience. In December 1989, I phoned Editor Mike Laurence and said I wanted to submit a reply to his "Editor's Choice" column blasting a New Zealand stamp promotion for using a leggy model and mentioning investment. In order to make the response timely, I even offered to fax it.

Mr. Laurence said no thanks to the fax offer and I mailed a paper copy. This was whittled down into a Letter to the Editor, without asking my permission, and run as such. Needless to say, no payment was received. Dane Claussen, whom I respect both as an editor and friend, did the same to an item I wrote as an "op-ed" piece for *The Stamp Wholesaler*. There, I at least knew about it before opening up the paper.

Also, I would question the wisdom of merely saying that a book reviewer was "expelled from [the] APS" without a mention of why. Is it overly relevant to the subject of the review? Was the writer expelled for some word-related sin such as plagiarism? □

[Linn's policy of whittling windy texts down to essentials, including the reduction of weighty replies into letters to the editor, is what good editors are paid to do. I do the same thing in this quarterly all the time. A writer who expects to be consulted about this is truly proud of his words, but may be in the wrong profession.]

[According to the October 1990 American Philatelist, page 955, James W. Felton was expelled from APS "for failure to pay for two APS sales circuits damaged while in his possession, and failure to reply to official Society correspondence." He also failed to reply to your editor's unofficial query.]

From Diana Manchester:

I'd like to respond, rationally I hope, to two letters to the editor in the Fourth Quarter 1990 *PC*. These were written by Glenn Estus and Larry McInnis.

First, I believe that Mr. Estus meant to call Russ Skavaril a xenophobe. A xenophile is a person who loves foreign countries and different customs. Somehow, from the tone of Mr. Estus's letter, I don't think that's what he meant to call Russ!

His wondering about what Russ's response would be to his FPQ publication being entered in an APS literature exhibition is an easy one. All of the APS shows that stage literature exhibitions require that the entries be in English. (Chicagopex only requires an English introduction.) Therefore, the FPQ would be respectfully declined.

I invite Mr. Estus to enter his publication in Colopex, non-competitively. The only cost to him would be a copy of a complete year of his publication. His entry would receive the same promotion and care that every other entry would receive. He would only be ineligible for competition.

I'd like to take this argument away from the name-calling that Estus and McInnis have instigated, and put it on the practical and common sense plane. If I am a literature organizer, and I make my exhibition open to all languages, *who the heck am I going to have for judges?* This is no little matter.

If I expanded my horizons, and limited my exhibition to only European languages, I might ask Charlie Peterson and Ernst Cohn to judge. They could handle a lot of the entries.

Who would join them? I have no idea because the APS does not require on their judging application form any indication of fluency in any language. Would Ernst and Charlie be required to judge every literature exhibition? I'll bet they'd love that!

Let's expand our horizons a bit more and accept entries in Swahili, American Indian dialects, and all Chinese dialects. *Who the heck is going to judge these?* I think I've made my point.

Russ, my husband Jason, and I have worked hard to develop the Colopex literature exhibition. We continue to work hard to promote and encourage authors and editors. We hope that we help with constructive criticisms. Despite our detractors, we all believe the encouragement and promotion of literature to be the most important reasons for any literature exhibition.

It is discouraging to find our efforts and the decisions we have made to be labeled as xenophobia, bigotry, and racism. □

From Mark A. Kellner:

The January 28, 1991, issue of *Linn's Stamp News* contained an astonishing item.

Contributing editor Gary Griffith quoted an unnamed *Linn's* editor's opinion about the non-denominated "make up" rate stamp: "It looks like something out of *Mad* magazine," the editor reportedly said.

First, since the speaker is not identified by name, how does a reader know that Mr. Griffith didn't say it himself—after all, he is a "Contributing Editor." Maybe he had a mirror by his desk.

Moreover, this is the first time in the last 18 years or so that I've noticed any philatelic publication quoting its own staff in judging a given item. It's not only bad journalistic form—neither *The New York Times* nor your local daily newspaper would do this—but it's also ridiculous. With the possible exception of television election-night or war coverage, reporters don't normally interview each other and print the results.

Surely Mr. Griffith—or his editors—can find some other “expert” on stamp design to quote for a story. I’d even settle for an editor at Scott Publishing Company, whose corporate parent also owns *Linn’s*. At least a Scott editor would be somewhat “separate” from the publication in which the story appears. They could also have called a cachet maker who may have seen the designs at the same time they did.

The kind of tactic used in the *Linn’s* story would rate a “dart” from the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Does it deserve any less from those of us concerned with quality reporting in philatelic journalism? □

[Mark A. Kellner is Gary Griffith’s counterpart at Stamp Collector. The most unusual aspect of this letter is that Kellner argues elsewhere in this issue that this type of criticism will cause “the death of philately as we know it.” As for Kellner’s comparison with the New York Times and other dailies, I wonder who he thinks those oft-quoted “knowledgeable observers” are.]

From Norman J. Collins:

This morning I received a photocopy of the review by Ken Lawrence of *The Foreign Post Offices in Palestine 1840-1918*, Volume 1.

Certain comments by Lawrence need answering as they are misleading and in one case very offensive.

His comments as regards the reference sections on forgeries are very misleading and offensive to me. That he should state that my real purpose for not stating the differences between genuine and forged postmarks/cachets is, using his words, “The real purpose is to keep the expertiser’s guild closed, and the rest of us at its mercy,” is libelous.

He states that the forgeries were created long ago and this shows his lack of knowledge of the subject. The majority of forged postmarks are of “modern” origin, much as those produced by Bernhard Friedrich in Berlin during the 1970s, which are recorded in *Reference Manual of Forgeries*, Volume 1, Release No. 16, September 1979, by Dr. Werner M. Bohne and published by the German Philatelic Society Inc. (USA).

Also the report in *Linn’s* by Dr. Bohne of the forgeries discovered in Germany in 1988, where these were found in a collection being examined for auction and included a “proof” sheet of the forgeries. The whereabouts of the instruments used for the forgeries are not known and could be used again.

I could go on and on, but that would mean a massive letter. May I point out I have no connection with any professional philatelists in their business ventures and I certainly would not have been elected to Fellowship of The Royal Philatelic Society if I had. I think Lawrence should publish an apology for his libelous remarks at the very least.

If you examine the reference work you will note the forgeries are all left full size so collectors can compare them with their material. I included forgeries because I strongly believe collectors should be alerted to them. If you examine most reference works on postal history, very few if any include sections of forgeries.

Lawrence also states, “I got a quick lesson in how dependent Steichele and his successors were on a fairly limited

sample of material.” This shows that he did not read the acknowledgements which record the owners of 50 collections and on top of that contributions by professional houses, these being only the contributors to me.

Due to the untimely demise of Anton Steichele, a list of those who contributed to him is not available. Seeing as most reference works on postal history are either based on one or two collections, or a correspondence, I find Lawrence’s remark insulting.

I have spent seven years seeking additional information for this work and my late friend Dr. Leopold (Paul) Dickstein three and a half years with the arduous task of translating the original material in German to English, so it could be available to English readers.

As to the separation line between day and month Lawrence refers to, it is quite clear in the text of the book that 1904 was an approximate date that it ceased to be used and not a hard and fast one. His remarks come in the category of “nit picking” and show his total lack of knowledge of the subject.

It is quite obvious Lawrence knows very little about Holy Land philately and the publications available. My late friend Anton’s *magnum opus* on the Ottoman Post Offices which was published by Arge Israel (Germany) is the standard reference work on the postal history of the Turkish Offices in Palestine. It had been intended to produce an updated version in both German and English after the present project is finished. Alas with the sad demise of Anton the drafts for this are not now accessible.

I would appreciate an assurance that an apology will be published for Lawrence’s libelous remarks as to what he states are our reasons for not publishing the differences between genuine and forged postmarks/cachet. Also I would appreciate a written apology from Lawrence. By his remarks being published this could leave the Writers Unit and himself open to litigation.

Having sat in an editorial chair for six years myself, I am surprised you did not put a “blue pencil” through that part of his “review.”

On his other remark, it would have been far better if he had reported directly to me his “new data.” As a standard practice, if I find something new not recorded in an article or reference work, I report it direct to the author as a matter of course. For philatelists to fail to do such is detrimental to the hobby and those who try to “score points” at the expense of someone who is doing his/her best for the hobby should be discouraged.

The second volume is now with the publishers and runs to over 200 pages of drafts, comprising Italian, Austrian, and Russian post offices, plus Jewish Colonies Messenger Services and Hotels. This has been a long slog as I suffer from an illness that affects coordination and concentration at times.

I hope that if a review copy of volume 2 is sent to you that you will pick a more competent reviewer for that. I have never seen even an article on the Holy Land by Lawrence, whereas I was awarded the Dr. Werner Hoexter Medal by the Swiss/German Israel Federation for my published research on Holy Land over the years, the Leslie Reggel Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Holy Land Philately by The

Society of Israel Philatelists (USA), and the Tapling Medal by The Royal Philatelic Society for my treatise *The Royal Mint Archives—Ireland 1921-1954* in 1990 (all three).

At the same time as preparing the English version of my late friend Anton Steichele's work, I prepared my own monograph *Overland Mail via the Syro-Iraqi Great Desert*, which was published in June 1990, and which has received very good reviews. That work took ten years of research with over 50 collections examined and the cooperation of many specialist societies whose interest cover the area, both in the U.K. and overseas.

As soon as the present work is published I will be starting on a work as regards the "Jewish Legion," which comprised three battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, and which will include the actual war diaries of the battalions for which I have "Crown" permission to publish. That file has been building up for over three years.

I also hope to produce a reference work on forged cancels of Palestine from Turkish times as I believe my fellow philatelists need such a reference work. □

[I make no apology, and stand by what I wrote. If this is how Collins responds to a favorable review of his book, imagine his torment at a negative one. The specific way I used his book and reported my findings would thrill most authors of specialized stamp books, including me. I do hope Collins's publisher will send him a copy of the First Amendment, and will notify him that, unlike his country, ours guarantees the press freedom to criticize.]

From Charles J. Peterson:

I wonder how many *PC* readers saw that journalistic equivalent of a great end run negated by a blatant personal foul, as perpetrated by Elizabeth Ann Sharpe in her review of *The 1990 Doonesbury Stamp Album (PC, Fourth Quarter 1990, pages 116-17)*? She does a fine job of discussing the origins of the book, treating some of the "stamp" subjects, and tendering an analysis of Trudeau's humor. Then she appears to forget that she's reviewing Trudeau, and moves from the reportorial mood to that of True Believer With Platform. It's one thing to report what Trudeau says/portrays; it's quite another to use the reviewer's voice to speak of "the shallow and fickle fiber of the man who leads the nation."

I feel rather strongly that philatelic journals are not the place for personal opinion on religion and politics, but that's a secondary issue here. The primary complaint is with a partisan political view presented in an ostensibly non-political forum, in the guise of reasonably objective philatelic evaluation. It is obviously appropriate that the reader be advised of the political content of the book—however, Sharpe goes beyond that with her own *ad hominem* remarks, presented as statement of fact.

Perhaps Sharpe did not intend to use the review as an occasion to champion Trudeau's particular political sentiments, and was only guilty of explicating his views in a manner which blurred the distinction between "Trudeau says" and "Sharpe says." In that case, she's got a problem with clarity. Whatever the reason, I think both the writer and the *PC* editor should have the whistle blown on them for this article. □

[I have contemplated this ever since Charlie Peterson called, and I don't agree. As I told Charlie, the close call for me was whether Trudeau's book merited review here at all. Having decided that it did, because of its philatelic trappings and sponsorship by Scott, political commentary is unavoidable. Had the reviewer taken the opposite position, declaring Trudeau's treatment of George Bush "outrageous and offensive," I'd have let it stand.]

From Huguette Gagnon (to George Griffenhagen):

I always enjoy very much *The Philatelic Communicator* and learn from it. As you must have noticed in the copies of our *MENELIK's Journal*, I have made big changes in its presentation since I bought a "small" word processor. In fact, I purchased the Smith Corona PWP 2000, which is an electronic typewriter with integrated personal word processor.

I would like however to see more about the standing of the Writers Unit concerning the issue of FIP on Black Blots. I agree 100 percent with them and think this is a very important question; the abusive issues are really a threat to philately and it should be made very explicit that without telling collectors what they should or should not collect, it should serve as a guide as to what can or cannot be exhibited.

When FIP states that some issues will not be accepted in exhibition under their patronage, well this should be a message to everyone and this is where the philatelic press should play their so important role.

When companies that issue catalogs and albums will understand the situation and stop mentioning these abusive issues, this will be of great service to collectors and philately in general.

I for one have been taken in the past by some of these issues since I collect Napoléon on stamps; unfortunately these abusive issues are most of the time very attractive and the only ones to commemorate certain aspects of a great personage's life otherwise never mentioned on stamps issued by countries concerned with that same personage.

Serious countries respect the rules, why cannot others like Sand Dunes comply?

I believe that, for instance, stamps issued in 1990 to commemorate General de Gaulle's triple anniversaries should have been solely issued by countries where he had a great influence, like France and her former colonies. This is what happened and this is the way it should be. No other country had to issue any on the subject and they did not. □

From Ronald V. Trefry (to George Griffenhagen):

The Philatelic Communicator has steadily improved over the last four issues with the first-quarter issue being very illegible and the fourth-quarter excellent, readable typefaces in the correct point setting as well as the right amount of "white space" for easy reading without eyestrain.

The "Secretary/Treasurer's Report" should be on the last page, but the "Table of Contents" should be located on the first page. A person shouldn't have to "flip" to the back page to find out what lies ahead. □

From Gary A. Van Cott:

Philatelic Periodicals of the United States and Canada is now being compiled by Van Cott Information Services, Inc. This publication will be a comprehensive source of information for philatelic writers, advertisers, and collectors. Survey forms have been sent to the contact address of more than 270 publications.

If you are the editor or publisher of a philatelic periodical and have not been contacted by January 18, 1991, please write or call Van Cott Information Services for a survey form. Our address is P.O. Box 9569, Las Vegas, NV 89191. Telephone (702) 438-2102. □

From Charles J. Peterson:

While pursuing Joe Frye down the paths of desktop publishing using *WordPerfect* and the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet III, I stumbled into that phenomenon known as "electronic bulletin boards." So far, I've found all kinds of task-specific computer applications, more new concepts than I've been able to absorb, and a goodly number of how-to-to-it papers.

Among my discoveries was an excellent tutorial on "Essential Formatting Skills in WordPerfect," a 13-page paper by Chris Wolf. This tells it the way a non-expert needs to learn it, with information not (readily) available in the five-foot shelf of WP books and manuals. The author has been gracious enough to authorize free distribution, and I'll be glad to send a copy to anyone who provides a stamped (52¢) addressed No. 10 envelope. Write to: Charles J. Peterson, Box 5559, Laurel, MD 20726. □

Reviews

Researching and Writing Made Easy

By Charles J. Peterson

Philatelic Literature: Compilation Techniques and Reference Sources, by James Negus. James Bendon, Limassol, Cyprus. 1991. 7" by 9 3/4", hard covers, x plus 293 pages, indexes. ISBN 9963-7624-3-3. £27.50 from the publisher, P.O. Box 6484, Limassol; in the United States, \$50 postpaid from Leonard Hartmann, Box 36006, Louisville, KY 40233-6066.

The best technical style book for philatelic authors and researchers, bar none, has been Jim Negus's *Good Bibliographic Practice* (1971) . . . which has been out of stock for some time. Now we have a successor volume ("replacement" is far too modest a term), which provides techniques as well as extensive bibliographic source material. It's a shame this book didn't appear several months earlier—it would make an ideal Christmas present for philatelic writers, researchers, editors, and literature enthusiasts.

The work is divided into four roughly equal parts, the first of which deals with "practical bibliography." What constitutes the necessary elements of bibliographic citation, so that the reader can track down that reference to "Ashbrook"? (Or so the researcher can in fact find it again him/herself, should the

need arise—as it invariably will!) Where does one find this information? What are the bibliographic peculiarities of some of our standard philatelic references, and how should we deal with them in a consistent, commonly understood manner?

These are the questions clearly dealt with in separate chapters concerning: citation of references; making lists; compiling bibliographies; indexing books; indexing periodicals; requirements for books; requirements for periodicals. (In these latter two chapters, the emphasis shifts from the preparation of individual articles to the technical aspects of editing books and journals—titles and half-titles, preliminary pages, use of running heads/feet, volume/issue numbering, pagination, copyright, use of reprints, etc.)

Part Two, the shortest section, covers methods of work. The chapters on use of card indexes and on note-taking and filing may seem elementary, but are well worth study because problems in these areas are all too often irreparable. There are also two chapters on use of a computer as a philatelic research and writing aid; these deal with *types* of applications, rather than with specific software packages, and include suggestions and examples.

The third section, dealing with "tracing published information," is an exceptional guide for researchers, old hands as well as beginners. It identifies, describes and gives user guidance for a variety of reference works, each with its separate chapter: philatelic library catalogs; book reviews; cumulative indexes; literature indexes; encyclopedic handbooks; and other sources (atlases, glossaries, almanacs, etc.). The bibliographic data given here is comprehensive and precise. This is supplemented by appendixes which provide equally detailed listings of: philatelic literature organizations (yes, the Writers Unit is listed, with current information); current stamp catalogs, general and by specialty; British philatelic journals from 1926 to 1989 (a well-worked up "first draft"); *The Stamp Lover's* "Index to Current Philatelic Literature."

A fifth appendix provides a volume/issue/whole number/date/pagination check list for the *Philatelic Literature Review* (Second Series).

Part 4 considers writing and publishing: writing guidelines applicable to commercial philatelic journals; handbook compilation; book publication (aimed at would-be book authors, and based on Negus's editorial experience with Stanley Gibbons). There's a final chapter with thoughtful remarks on establishing "the personal reference library."

Negus knows whereof he writes. He's a professional philatelic author and editor, a literature specialist, and an accomplished philatelic researcher. His book is written with the thoroughness and attention to documentation appropriate to a work of this nature, yet is highly readable. Bibliophiles will be delighted with the lists of indexes, bibliographies, catalogs and other sources, as well as with the treasure of background information and citations packed into the 33 pages of notes and references that supplement the main text. All users will appreciate the well-crafted pair of indexes (18 pages) which close the volume.

The book gets very high marks for accuracy and comprehensiveness. There are some faults; Len Hartmann has called

my attention to a few omissions in the lists of indexes and bibliographies (including Byne's exhaustive bibliography on Confederate philately), and there are some items that have changed since Negus initially recorded them. These, however, are minor points. James Negus has given the writer and researcher a most helpful manual; I recommend it without reservation. □

Bermuda Airmail

By Kendall C. Sanford

The Airmails of Bermuda 1925-1989, A Specialised Catalogue and Illustrated Price List by William J. Clark. The Havemeyer Press, Greenwich, Conn., 1990. 64 pages softcover \$19.95 postpaid within the U.S., (add \$3.00 for postage to other countries), from Aerophil, 4 Ave. General Geiguer, CH-1197 Prangins (Vaud), Switzerland.

This is a catalog and a price list of material the author has for sale. It grew out of a project originally conceived by the Bermuda Collectors' Society, namely the production of a highly specialized catalog of all aspects of Bermuda philately. However the first flight section, which Clark was asked to prepare, seemed increasingly to warrant its own separate publication.

The catalog lists nearly every known first flight or special flight connected with Bermuda. Each page lists a different flight, with all known covers or dispatches listed and priced.

One cover from each flight is shown, and where the author did not have a cover or had not seen one, there is a blank space, to be filled in for the next edition of the catalog, I hope.

The catalog was done on an Apple Macintosh computer, and the covers were scanned with a computer scanner. This shows the cachets and markings quite well, but the stamps on the covers do not show up well with this method. However, the catalog is not really concerned with the stamps, so the scanning of the covers is adequate.

The listings are in chronological order, so it is easy to find a particular flight . . . if you know the date of it. An index listing the various airlines and flights would have made it more useful.

There are only a few errors, such as saying that Northeast Airlines was taken over by Eastern Air Lines (it was actually taken over by Delta). Also, there are a few errors in airline names noted.

Some abbreviations are not explained, such as BSAA (which the average collector probably would not know is for British South American Airways).

The bibliography also left out some major references, such as some of the Francis J. Field publications.

In spite of the few errors or omissions, the catalog is well done, easy to use, and provides a useful listing of all Bermuda aerophilately.

The author plans to provide updates or revised editions as additional information and covers are forthcoming. Thus, future editions will pick up the missing information and the few errors.

The price seems a bit high, when compared for example

to the AAMS publications with a similar price. However, the author advises readers that people who contribute significant information or editorial assistance will receive free copies of the next edition. □

Rhodesia's Precursor

By Ernst M. Cohn

Mashonaland—A Postal History 1890-96 by Alan Drysdall and Dave Collis, Christie's Robson Lowe, 1990 xiii + 171 pages, 8" by 10", maps, tables, illustrations, hardbound with b/w dust cover £35 + £3 overseas postage, from publisher, 8 King St., St. James's, London, England SW1Y 6QT.

It is amazing that a very small, specialized slice of postal history like this can take up a whole book. Not only that, but it seems that not all of the documentation, i.e., covers, has been discovered, i.e., recognized as such. So additional finds are still possible.

After the usual prefatory material, the book is divided into 17 main sections, the first of which is the history of the area. Others concern the primary correspondences extant, the individual despatches by which mail was sent, various mail routes, histories and operations of post offices in the area, stamps and postal stationery, postage rates, postal and telegraph hand stamps, combination franking, campaign mail, estimated volumes of mail, references, National Archives files, and a bibliography. Those are followed by a dozen tables and two appendices.

Text and illustrations are clear, though the scheme of placement of the latter is not obvious, paper and binding are excellent, proof reading was very fine.

Anyone interested in taking up this obscure bit of postal history, hence one that still permits some perhaps spectacular finds, should own this book in order to know what to look for.

To those who wish to read about the development of postal systems in primitive areas, starting with runners and mounted messengers, mule- and ox-drawn carts, serving a band of military adventurers and explorers for precious metals and other treasures of the soil, this book is highly recommended.

It tells not only their postal histories but their personal ones as well, even about the philatelic monkey business that was carried on a century ago (and not just in British territories and colonies, of course). □

West African Postal History

By Ernst M. Cohn

The Postmarks of Sierra Leone: 1854-1961 by Frank L. Walton, Sheffield, 1990, 8¼" by 11¼", typed, softbound, many illustrations, maps, \$30 airmail postpaid, from Frank L. Walton, 8 Grasmere Road, Dronfield Woodhouse, Sheffield S18 5PS, United Kingdom.

Philip Beale's *The Postal Service of Sierra Leone* was the catalyst for the author's efforts and served as the source for

some of the information reproduced in the present book. John Forrest's extensive collection of postmarks helped with date extensions and illustrations. Other members of the 40-year-old West Africa Study Circle collaborated with information as well.

The result is an exemplary compilation of postmarks, illustrated and with annotations. The book contains, besides a foreword, introduction, and bibliography, eleven chapters covering place postmarks, TPOs, military marks, slogans, registry, auxiliary marks, a collection of notes on the markings, foreign stamps and usages, maps, an index and a valuation guide.

By "usages" are meant non-postal cancels on stamps, such as used by banks, telegraph offices and for fiscal purposes.

"Foreign" means outside of Sierra Leone, so that includes markings from the United Kingdom, such as "F.B." (Foreign Branch) and a couple of London postmarks. One wonders whether some of this mail may have been taken in official mail pouches.

The illustrations and maps are clear and useful. Typing is quite legible and wire binding is sturdy. The book provides an excellent basis for the study and understanding of the postal history of this little region of Africa. □

The AEF in World War I

By Ernst M. Cohn

The Postal History of the AEF, 1917-1923 by Theo. Van Dam (ed.), Fishkill, 1990, 265 pages, many illustrations, maps, tables, 8½" by 11", hardbound, \$46 postpaid in U.S. (WCC members \$42), elsewhere add \$2 for surface mail, all payments to War Cover Club, from The Printer's Stone, Ltd., Box 30, Fishkill, NY 12524.

World War I generated a tremendous amount of postal historical documentation, and even the brief period in which the AEF functioned has left mountains of covers. The history proper of that event is far from fully explored, as becomes evident from this revised edition of the work.

In addition to the introduction, preface, acknowledgments, bibliography and valuation guide, the fourteen chapters cover many but not all aspects of the subject: Specifically, sections on Camps in the U.S. and naval postmarks (except for North Russia and Siberia) have been omitted here. Several topics are treated for the first time in this revision, and I suspect that others may become apparent and worth exploring as interest in this topic grows.

It is strange, and unfortunate, that so many postal histories of natural and man-made human misfortunes are neglected until it is too late to uncover all the details that fascinate collectors and historians alike—in retrospect. Will we ever learn from the past, or are we forever condemned to repeat it?

Fourteen authors (by my count) have written about the postal markings, censorship, stationery and other aspects of the U.S. side of World War I. The introduction whets the appetite with a survey of what is in store for the reader. There follows a classification of the postmarks; a chapter on prisoner-of-war mail; descriptions and discussions of specific

numbers and number series of special interest; the Red Cross; patriotic covers; the Marines; censorship; aviation; occupation; North Russian campaign; Siberian covers.

Any one of these chapters is grist for a major collection and for further research. One need only look at the sources that are cited to get ideas where else to look. For example, there must be histories of military units that contain postal information; biographies of Americans who were in or with the AEF; and, of course, daily papers that contain excerpts from mail and well as information on how and what to mail. There are enough research suggestions here to fill quite a number of lifetimes.

Unfortunately, the book has its negative aspects, too. Part of them may be due to lack of editorial coordination. That is particularly true for chapters 2 and 4. Also, the writing is not always clear. For example, in chapter 2, how does one differentiate the A1000 from the A1100 ("improvised") series of postmarks? Definitions are needed: What is meant by "scarce" and "extremely rare"?

The quality of the illustrations ranges from acceptable to impossible, for which there is no excuse.

Proofreading was poor for large portions of the book, particularly annoying for names of French places. A French "ZIP code" book might have been used for checking. Postal historians are aware of such useful tools and should use them when needed.

A heading on page 30, "World War I," is nonsensical and presumably should have been "Magazine Forwarding" or some such. There is even a "U.S. Postal Office Department" and dozens of misspellings.

Typeface, paper, printing and binding are excellent.

Despite its shortcomings, the book is highly recommended as an introduction and reference to the postal history of the first war. Its dissemination will stimulate other students and collectors to take up the subject. That, in turn, should lead to many new discoveries and the need for a third edition, much improved in all respects. □

APC Awards

These are the 1990 winners of the American Philatelic Congress awards for contributions to philatelic literature and to *The Congress Book*:

The Walter R. McCoy award for the best article in *The Congress Book 1990* went to Stephen Knapp for "Color Sampling the Contract of 1890: Preparations for a New Series of U.S. Definitives."

The runner-up and winner of the Erani P. Drossos award was Michel Forand for "The Bermuda Postmaster Stamps."

The Jere. Hess Barr award for the best presentation at the APS Writers' Forum went to Ronald E. Leshner Sr.

The Eugene Klein memorial award for the best book by an APC member published during the past year went to Thomas E. Giraldi and Peter P. McCann's *Postal History of the Cayman Islands*.

The Dorothy Colby award for the best article or pamphlet published during the past year went to Robert Dalton Harris for "UPU Mail" in *P.S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History*. □

Coming Literature Competitions

- Deadline for entering the STAMPSHOW 90 literature competition, to be held August 22-25 in Philadelphia, is May 1. For entry forms and a prospectus, write to Daniel G. Asmus, Director of Communications, American Philatelic Society, P.O. Box 8000, State College, PA 16803.
- Deadline for entries to the SESCAL 91 literature competition, to be held October 11-13 in Los Angeles, is June 15. For entry forms and a prospectus, send a No. 10 SASE to Bob de Violini, SESCAL Literature, P.O. Box 5025, Oxnard,

CA 93031.

The literature will be on open display, so visitors will be able to examine the entries. Information sheets listing the price and source of all the literature on display, whether entered in the competition or not, will be available.

- Deadline for entering the CHICAGOPEX '91 literature competition, to be held November 1-3, is September 1. Entry forms and prospectus are available from CHICAGOPEX '91 Literature Committee, P.O. Box A3953, Chicago, IL 60690.

►► Page 2, column one.

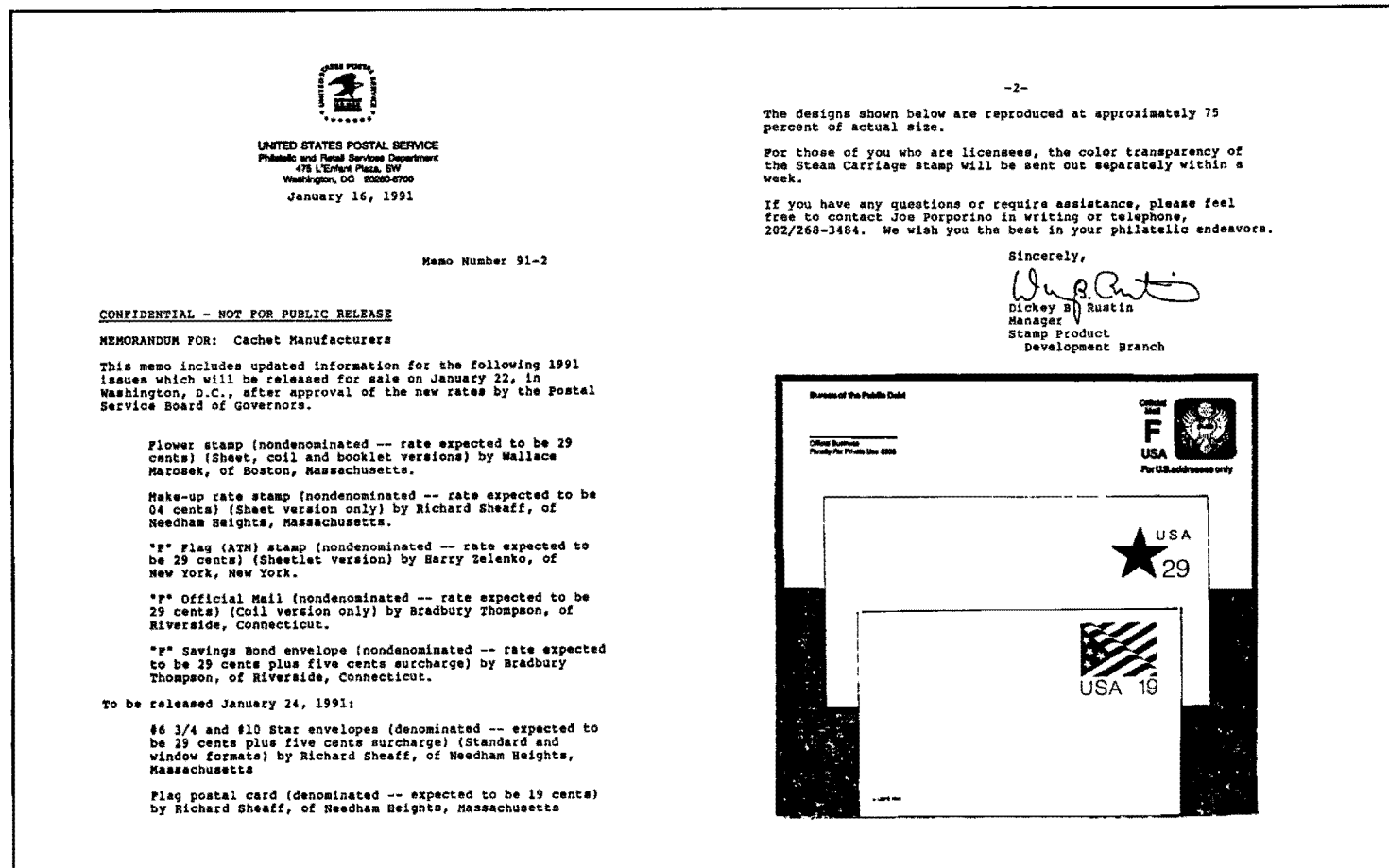


Fig. 1. This letter with full-color illustrations is a typical notice of new issues provided to cachet makers while it is denied to the media.

►► An Open Letter . . . From page 1 column 2.

stated with candor just as yours do, our role as representatives of the hobby overshadows any narrower interests we may have in this controversy.

Taken at face value, the villain who has declared war on us is Donald M. McDowell. Most of the Postal Service staff are friendly and eager to help writers with our needs, although a few seem to take sadistic delight in withholding information, or in misleading us. But as the antagonism continues to escalate, it becomes evident that you, Gordon Morison, are playing good cop to Don McDowell's bad cop, from a script approved at the very top, by you, Anthony Frank. Don McDowell is not a free-lance provocateur, and

people in his position of importance are not congenitally ill-mannered.

At the surface, we are divided by two issues. One is the deteriorating quality of United States stamps and postal stationery. The second is the denial of information to writers and collectors that is freely offered to foreign governments, potential contractors, trade-fair browsers, miscellaneous personal friends and passers-by, and first-day cover manufacturers. (Figure 1.) A current example is the latest Artmaster and House of Farnam price list for dealers, which lists several stamps to be issued later this year that have not yet been announced to the philatelic press.

If government agencies preoccupied with security, such as the Pentagon and the State Department, can negotiate accept-

able agreements with media representatives for handling embargoed news, why does the Postal Service insist on sharing its secrets with everyone but us first, including people lacking even a remotely related interest in them? Why are reports that used to be freely available to us now withheld? Now that the pertinent contracts with private-sector suppliers have been secured, why are we not permitted to read the Deloitte Haskins and Sells 1989 study?

Underlying many of these problems is your policy decision to dismantle the reliable, high-quality production of postal paper by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and to direct an ever larger share of purchase orders to the cheaper (in both senses of the word) private sector.

The specifications for non-government suppliers of postage stamps, though broad enough to embrace a discreet level of competition, are actually tailored to direct the lion's share of USPS stamp business to the various companies associated with Richard C. Sennett.

Sennett, the specific recipient of McDowell's magnanimity, and of an ever-larger share of the USPS annual budget, is a convicted criminal. Since his crime was directly related to the subjects at hand, we are entitled to wonder:

Why is Don McDowell so obsessed with making Richard Sennett and his companies rich? When McDowell insults us and denies us access to information, is it because he fears we'll catch on to his hidden agenda?

Or, if those questions are too harsh, let us turn them around a bit:

For several years, McDowell has championed certain themes in stamp production—offset, gravure, and flexographic printing instead of embossing and line-engraved intaglio; gaudy poster art instead of carefully crafted elegance; gimmickry (from holograms to pressure sensitive self-adhesives) instead of durability; and the lowest bid instead of the highest quality. Is it mere coincidence that these criteria work to Sennett's advantage and the Bureau's disadvantage? If there is an innocent explanation, why conceal information that would allow a proper public airing of the policy issues?

Let's take these problems one at a time—first, the pertinent history; second, our specific grievances; and third, USPS responses and our rebuttal.

Richard C. Sennett went to work for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1964 as a staff engineer. He rose to become the BEP's assistant director for research and engineering, described in his own words as "chief technical consultant to the staff of the Bureau."

Both Sennett and his boss, Bureau Director James A. Conlon, left the Bureau in 1977 for employment with American Bank Note Company. Conlon has not been heard from in years, but Sennett has led a charmed existence, and has become the principal figure among the various security printing firms descended from ABN that do most of the non-government printing for the Postal Service, a share that grows every year.

Shortly after Conlon and Sennett left the Bureau for ABN, the Postal Service's largest private contractor, irregularities were discovered in certain ABN food coupon

and printing press contracts with BEP. Concern deepened after a September 1977 Treasury Department audit, and a General Accounting Office investigation a year later. In May of 1979, U.S. Senator Sam Nunn's Subcommittee on Investigations held extensive hearings on Conlon and Sennett's activities, concerned that they may have violated the federal Ethics in Government Act.

On August 9, 1979, Conlon and Sennett were indicted by a Washington, D.C., federal grand jury. Conlon's indictment alleged that he,

unlawfully and knowingly did participate personally and substantially as an officer and employee, through decision, recommendation, and the rendering of advice, in a proposal of the American Bank Note Company for a Security Signature System for U.S. Currency, a particular matter in which to his knowledge the American Bank Note Company, a company with which he was negotiating and had an arrangement concerning prospective employment, had a financial interest.

He was also charged with having made false statements to the grand jury. After an initial dismissal, appeal, and reinstatement of the indictment, a jury trial found Conlon guilty of the conflict of interest charge on July 28, 1980, and on September 12, 1980, he was sentenced to one year's unsupervised probation and fined \$7,500.

Sennett's indictment alleged that he,

being an officer and employee of the executive branch of the United States Government, that is, an Assistant Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, unlawfully and knowingly did participate personally and substantially as such officer and employee, through decision, recommendation, and the rendering of advice, in a controversy regarding Magna Press modifications, a particular matter in which to his knowledge the American Bank Note Company, a company with which he was negotiating and had an arrangement concerning prospective employment, had a financial interest.

Sennett, too, was charged with lying to the grand jury. In a plea-bargain arrangement with government prosecutors, Sennett pleaded *nolo contendere* to the conflict-of-interest charges. On January 11, 1980, he was sentenced to one year's unsupervised probation and a \$500 fine.

Despite his disgrace, Sennett never missed a beat as a stamp production kingpin. He retained his first-name cordiality with the chairman of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, Belmont Faires, a connection that non-criminals who desire stamp-printing contracts must envy, and he continued to rack up stamp design credits. At the height of his shame in 1980, he modeled the 15¢ Benjamin Banneker and 15¢ American Education commemoratives.

These are other Richard Sennett stamps: 20¢ Crime Prevention (! Figure 2.), 20¢ Joseph Priestley, 20¢ Martin Luther, 20¢ Alaska, 20¢ Carter G. Woodson, 20¢ Hawaii,

20¢ Health Research, 20¢ St. Lawrence Seaway, 20¢ Roanoke Voyages, 22¢ Jerome Kern, 22¢ Mary McLeod Bethune, 22¢ Duck Decoys, 22¢ Social Security, 22¢ Public Education, 22¢ International Youth Year, 22¢ Arkansas, 22¢ Sojourner Truth, 22¢ Republic of Texas, 22¢ Public Hospitals, 22¢ Duke Ellington, 22¢ Arctic Explorers, 22¢ Wood-carved Figurines, 22¢ Enrico Caruso, 22¢ New Jersey, 22¢ Georgia, 22¢ Winter Olympics, 22¢ James Weldon Johnson, 22¢ Cats, 25¢ Pheasant booklet, 25¢ South Carolina, 25¢ New Hampshire, 25¢ North Carolina, 25¢ Francis Ouimet, 25¢ Antarctic Explorers, 25¢ Special Occasions booklet, 25¢ North Dakota, 25¢ Washington, 25¢ Arturo Toscanini, 25¢ South Dakota, 25¢ Lou Gehrig, 25¢ Ernest Hemingway, 25¢ Letter Carriers, 25¢ Pre-Columbian Artifacts, 25¢ Sleigh, 25¢ Eagle and Shield, 25¢ Idaho, 25¢ Ida B. Wells, 25¢ Classic Films, 25¢ Marianne Moore, 25¢ Olympians, and 25¢ Eisenhower.

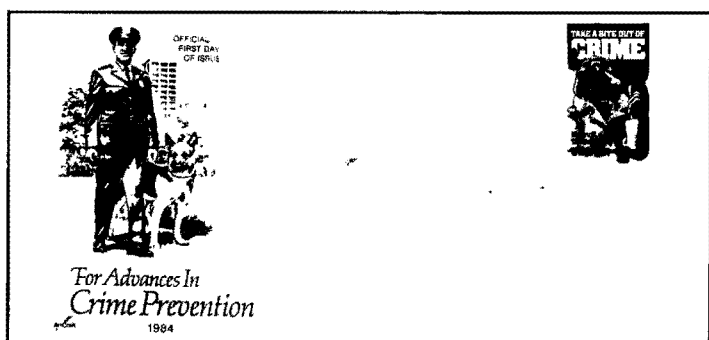


Fig. 2. After his criminal conviction on a federal conflict-of-interest charge Richard Sennett continued to model stamps for the Postal Service, including this one.

This is a hastily compiled list, so there may be others that I missed, but it is plain to see that Don McDowell, as the chief procurement officer for U.S. postage stamps, has thrown a lot of work Sennett's way—more than 50 stamps over the course of a decade. When it comes to securing stamp printing contracts, crime has paid handsomely.

Today we can see the bankruptcy of McDowell's policy. Despite a three-year lead time, the nondenominated (29¢) F Flower and (4¢) Make-Up Rate sheet stamps are the worst every issued by the United States. The design of the make-up stamp is an eyesore, and its inscription syntax reflects an embarrassingly low literacy level. The shoddiness of the F sheet stamp is a constant source of complaint from users. In a way, it's easy to see why McDowell doesn't welcome questions from the philatelic press. The Make-Up Rate stamp is a product of American Bank Note Co.; U.S. Bank Note Co., the manufacturer of the F sheet stamp, now owns ABN. (The F coil stamps, printed by the Bureau, and the F booklets, some printed by BEP and others by a new private contractor, KCS, are far superior in quality.)

As overall stamp production quality cheapened, McDowell declared war on the Bureau, but with an unlikely ally. In 1979, the government had prosecuted Conlon and Sennett for serving ABN's interests while working for the Bureau. A decade later, McDowell demanded that the Bureau surrender to him the fruits of its careful and costly research, so that he

could turn it over to BEP's private-sector competitors. In an ironic twist, the General Accounting Office, which had exposed Conlon and Sennett's illegal giveaways to ABN in 1979, now supported McDowell's desire to do the very same thing.

(In fairness, though, this was a Reagan/Bush-era GAO study, done at a time when deregulation, lack of oversight, and giving away the government store to private interests laid the groundwork for everything from the HUD scandal to the Savings and Loan debacle, so the December 1989 GAO report is properly read as a political product of its time, not as a careful and responsible audit. Even the Treasury Department's reply failed to defend the Bureau properly.)

To its credit, the Bureau resisted this giveaway of its most advanced technologies and product-development strategies. McDowell's demands and the GAO's backing don't change the underlying reality: McDowell is insisting that one of his suppliers surrender its valuable trade secrets to a competitor, free of charge.

According to one of my sources, McDowell has lured a top Bureau technician away from BEP and has given him a well-paid Postal Service position, thus accomplishing his aim in a different way. If the Bureau were a private firm, McDowell's antics would be considered industrial espionage. But he is not a free agent in this. His actions must reflect policies set by you, Mr. Frank.

It may well be that McDowell's escalating attacks on the philatelic press stem from a belief that we stamp writers are on the Bureau's side in this dispute. No doubt some are, if for no other reason than the fact that the Bureau is usually forthcoming with information we need, but its competitors are not. Others who don't take sides when the issues are abstractly presented may lean toward the Bureau's side as the questions about Richard Sennett's Midas touch go unanswered. But by far the greatest consensus among us is a longing to see high standards of quality in stamp design and production restored, regardless of which printer manufactures them.

Having preemptively launched his attack on us, McDowell squirms to justify it. When pressed to explain, he replies that the philatelic press reaches only a small number of his potential customers, and he'd rather reach untold millions through the major dailies.

Even were the dailies to provide the amount of coverage he and we would like, which they won't (actually, stamp coverage in the mainstream press is declining, not growing), that is no excuse. Providing us the information we need in no way interferes with the USPS ability to serve the dailies and the networks. To the contrary, since major media reporters routinely consult us for information when they're working on unfamiliar stamp stories, it would help that goal to provide us with full and timely information.

In some cases the denial of information is silly and spiteful. Does McDowell think there are two million members of the public in line for pictorial commemorative cancels? Of course not. Probably 90 percent of those are collected by our readers. Why, then, make it so difficult for us to publish the information they need? Spite is the only

plausible answer.

Let me share some personal experiences from Mississippi:

First is the typical situation when one of those two million casual collectors makes a purchase at a philatelic counter. The customer wants more information about stamp collecting. Whom does the philatelic clerk call for help? Postal Service headquarters in Washington? *The Washington Post* stamp writer? No, he calls me, or another member of the Jackson Philatelic Society. Despite McDowell's contempt for us, the Postal Service continues to rely on us as a permanent unpaid reservoir of expert information for its customers. Without us, philatelic revenue would be diminished considerably. Stamp collectors and writers across the country have similar experiences all the time.

Second is what happens when I see something new that ought to be reported. I call the post office's local media representative. Here's his exact statement: "If anybody else asked that question, I would get an answer for it today, but since you write for *Linn's*, I have to get approval from Washington first." I had to wait three weeks after my last request for information.

The same policy is in place at your headquarters in Washington. In years past, we could routinely get information we needed from Linda Foster. Today, if a reporter calls, she can't answer our questions, but if a stamp dealer needs the exact same data, he gets it. The order to Foster followed immediately after information she supplied helped me to expose Wayne Anmuth's wrongdoing. Though Don McDowell is the point man for this "anybody-but-the-press" policy, it couldn't exist without approval from the top.

It is time to put an end to this sorry state of affairs, and to restore the cooperative relationship between Postal Service headquarters and writers for the philatelic press. But that won't happen unless you men at the top decree it, and make clear your intentions. Down below, attitudes are too badly poisoned, and anti-hobby practices are too routine, to reform themselves. You must tell your subordinates to stop treating us as the enemy.

The alternative is not pleasant to contemplate. We have demonstrated many times that we can develop independent sources of information when we must. If there is nothing to cover up, why make our task so difficult, knowing that one way or another we will obtain the information our readers need? On the other hand, if something is being covered up, rest assured we will unearth it, publish it, and hold wrongdoers accountable for their misdeed.

Readers of this letter will differ as to whether it makes a persuasive *prima facie* case that something unsavory underlies Postal Service hostility to the philatelic press. But the longer the current situation persists, the less plausible will be any alternative explanation. Please, instruct your people to stop this foolishness now, before things get any worse.

Our request, and here I can confidently speak for every writer, is not unreasonable. The letter and spirit of the federal Freedom of Information Act as amended requires that all information held by any agency of government, including

the Postal Service, must be available to the public on request, excepting only those items that are specifically exempted by law. In those cases, the exempt material only may be withheld—not entire documents that include both kinds of material—and even the exempt material must be disclosed once the specific need for confidentiality has passed. Simple, good-faith adherence to those principles would place us back on an amiable common course, regardless of other differences we might continue to have.

Sincerely, Ken Lawrence □

►► Sec.-Treasurer—from page 20.

0553 Ralph E. Jacquemin of Phoenix, Arizona.

1492 Russell E. Ott of Irving, Texas.

1519 William Rowcroft, Jr. of South Ozone, New York.

Closed Albums

We regret to report the death of:

1496 Harry E. Ehrich of Columbus, Ohio, who died January 28, 1991.

Delinquent Members

The following WU 30 members are delinquent and this will be the last issue of *The Philatelic Communicator* they will receive until their 1991 dues are paid.

1548 Frederick William Baumann of Sidney, Ohio.

1543 James P. Bender of Pompano Beach, Florida.

1074 John M. Buchner of Gainesville, Florida.

1456 Edward J. Davis, Jr. of Tiverton, Rhode Island.

1446 Marguerite J. Doney of Allendale, New Jersey.

1563 Robin Michael Ellis of San Antonio, Texas.

1462 James W. Felton of Little Rock, Arkansas.

1581 Rolf Gummesson of Stockholm, Sweden.

1388 Albert C. Hardy Jr. of Lompoc, California.

1555 Charles Henderson of Jamaica, New York.

1508 Karl E. Henson of San Antonio, Texas.

1528 Regis M. Hoffman of Glenshaw, Pennsylvania.

1281 R. Malcom Hooper of East Hartford, Connecticut.

1569 Ruth Kimball Kent of Nashville, Tennessee.

0693 Susan M. McDonald of Canton, Ohio.

0666 Harry C. Meier of Palmyra, Virginia.

1348 Lester A. Michel of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

1304 Val Guy Moreau of Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

1156 John T. Nugent of Meriden, Connecticut.

1083 Michael C. O'Reilly of Huntsville, Alabama.

1320 Frances Pendelton of Sacramento, California.

1561 Gerry Weinberger of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

1311 Robert L. Wendt of Lewisville, North Carolina.

1472 Steven S. Weston of Del Mar, California.

1500 Robert F. Yacano of Eden, New York.

Prompt notice of upcoming address change assures members' receipt of each issue of *The Philatelic Communicator* as promptly as USPS carries it to them.

George Griffenhagen, WU 30 Secretary-Treasurer
2501 Drexel Street
Vienna, VA 22180

Writers Unit 30, APS
2501 Drexel Street
Vienna VA 22180
Address Correction Requested

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TO:

Secretary-Treasurer's Report (As of March 6, 1991.)

Denver Writers Unit # 30 Breakfast

The traditional Breakfast of the Writers Unit # 30 at ROMPEX '91 and the Spring Meeting of the American Philatelic Society in Denver, Colorado has been scheduled for 8:30 a.m., Sunday, May 19, 1991, and will be held in the Breckenridge Room of the Holiday Inn Denver I-70 East Hotel and Convention Center.

Tickets are \$10.00 per person. Order from WU30 Secretary-Treasurer George Griffenhagen, 2501 Drexel Street, Vienna, VA 22180. (Telephone (703) 560-2413).

Payment in full by money order or check drawn on a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars, payable *Writers Unit 30, APS*, must accompany ticket orders.

Hotel accommodations at the Holiday Inn may be secured by writing them at 15500 East 40th Avenue, Denver CO 80239 or by telephoning (303) 371-9494. ROMPEX rates until April 15 are \$54.50 single or \$60.50 double occupancy.

Philadelphia Writers Unit # 30 Breakfast

The 1991 STAmPsHOW Writers Unit Breakfast will be held at 8:30 a.m., Sunday, August 25, 1991, at the Penn Tower Hotel in Philadelphia. Tickets will be \$11.00 per person and should be ordered directly from APS, P.O. Box 8000, State College, PA 16803.

Welcome

We welcome the following new members who have joined WU 30 since our December 15, 1990, report:

- 1586 Col. L. G. Sheno, 190 Defence Colony, Indiranagar, Bangalore, 560 038, India. Editor: *Ind Dak* (monthly philatelic journal); Author: *Thematic Stamp Collecting*. Sponsor: Ken Lawrence.
- 1587 Gerald Edward Gray, 2201 Wayne Street, Copperas Cove, TX 76522. Author: *Newsletter* (Stamp Pals International); Free-lance writer: *Global Stamp News*. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.
- 1588 Barry Newton, P.O. Box 5295, Fairlawn, OH 44334. Editor: *First Days* (American First Day Cover Society); Author: *Discovering the Fun in First Day Covers*. Sponsor: Ken Lawrence.
- 1589 Ralph D. Mitchener, 1253 Sherman Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K2C 2M7 Canada. Editorial consultant: *Canadian Philatelist* (Royal Phil. Society of Canada). Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.
- 1590 Charles J. G. Verge, P.O. Box 2788, Station D, Ott-

awa, Ontario, K1P 5W8 Canada. Author: *Irish S.P. 1 Censor Labels 1939-1945*. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

- 1591 Russell H. Anderson, 115 Clearview Ave., Torrington, CT 06790. Free-lance writer: *Linn's Stamp News*; *Stamp Collector*; *UPU Quarterly*; *Close-up* (Czeslaw Slania Study Group). Sponsor: John Hotchner.

Reinstated

The following former member has been reinstated:

- 0758 Dr. Robert Rabinowitz, 37 Stanwick Place, Stamford, CT 06905. Columnist: *Stamp Collector*. Sponsor: John T. Nugent.

Contributions

We thank the following for a supplemental donation:

- 0078 Barbara Mueller of Jefferson, Wisconsin
0269 Gale J. Raymond of Houston, Texas.

In addition, the Columbus, Ohio, Philatelic Club has made a contribution in the memory of the late Harry Ehrich, who was interested in a wide spectrum of philatelic activities including the promotion and encouragement of philatelic writing.

Resignations

- 0328 Brian M. Green of Kernersville, North Carolina.

►► Page 19.

Table of Contents

The President's Message	1
An Open Letter to the Postmaster General	1
Coming Up	2
Changes	2
Editorial	2
Specialty Societies—Show Your Words	3
On the Death of Philately as We Know It	4
Grammar and Style	5
Letter Exchange	5
Writers Hall of Fame Nominations Open	6
Go, and Buy Thee a Macintosh	6
Letters	7
Reviews	13
APC Awards	15
Coming Literature Competitions	16
Secretary-Treasurer's Report	20